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Description

LIGHT EMITTING DIODE ARRANGEMENT FOR A HIGH POWER LIGHT
EMITTING DIODE AND METHOD FOR PRODUCING A LIGHT

5 EMITTING DIODE ARRANGEMENT

This patent application claims the priority of German
Patent Application 102004009284.2-33, the disclosure
content of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

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The invention relates to a light emitting diode
arrangement for high power light emitting diodes which
are mounted onto a flexible printed circuit board.
Furthermore, the invention relates to a method for
15 producing the light emitting diode arrangement.

The document DE 199 22 176 A1 describes a light
emitting diode array which is surface-mounted on a
flexible board and which is applied on a heat sink. In
20 this case, the heat sink may have any desired form, so
that motor vehicle luminaires such as flashing
indicators or the like can be constructed which can be
adapted to the external contour of the vehicle.

25 It is an object of the present invention to specify a
light emitting diode arrangement for high power light
emitting diodes which is particularly easy to mount.
Furthermore, it is an object of the invention to
specify a method for producing such a light emitting
30 diode arrangement.

The objects are achieved by means of the light emitting
diode arrangement according to patent claim 1 and
furthermore by means of a method for producing said
35 arrangement according to patent claim 31. Subclaims
relate to advantageous refinements of the invention.

A light emitting diode arrangement having at least one
high power light emitting diode is specified. In this

case, the high power light emitting diode is mounted onto a flexible printed circuit board. In this connection, high power light emitting diodes are understood to mean so-called high power light emitting diodes which have a power consumption of at least 300 mW. The typical power consumption for a high power light emitting diode lies between 1 and 3 W. One example of such a high power light emitting diode is for example the light emitting diode known from the document DE 101 17 889 A1.

On account of their relatively high power consumption, high power light emitting diodes exhibit a thermal emission. There, the dragon light emitting diode mentioned has a thermal connection part which bears on a mounting carrier and by means of which the heat arising during operation of the LED is emitted to the mounting carrier.

In the present light emitting diode arrangement, the mounting carrier is provided by a flexible printed circuit board. In one preferred embodiment of the light emitting diode arrangement, the high power light emitting diode is soldered onto the flexible printed circuit board. By means of the soldering process the light emitting diode is both electrically contact-connected to the flexible printed circuit board and mechanically fixed on the printed circuit board.

In one preferred embodiment, the flexible printed circuit board contains at least one flexible carrier layer. In this case, the flexible carrier layer preferably contains one of the following materials: polyimide, polyethylene naphthalate, polyester, FR4. Other materials may also be suitable for use in the flexible carrier layer of the printed circuit board if, in this case, the flexibility of the printed circuit board is preserved and good forwarding of the heat

generated by the high power light emitting diode is ensured by the carrier layer.

5 The flexible printed circuit board furthermore preferably contains a thermally conductive layer. This thermally conductive layer is in thermal contact with the high power light emitting diode.

10 Said thermal contact may be produced for example by soldering the thermal connection part of the high power light emitting diode onto the thermally conductive layer. From the thermal connection part of the high power light emitting diode, heat propagates firstly in the thermally conductive layer. Afterward, the heat is
15 emitted to the surroundings over a large area and taken up for example by the flexible carrier layer. For its part, the flexible carrier layer dissipates the heat to the surroundings over a large area.

20 Owing to the good heat conducting properties of metal, a metal is preferably used for the thermally conductive layer. In one particular preferred embodiment of the light emitting diode arrangement, the thermally conductive layer contains copper.

25 In one embodiment of the light emitting diode arrangement, the thermally conductive layer and also the electrical conductor tracks are situated in the same plane of the flexible printed circuit board. The
30 thermally conductive layer is preferably a separate layer. That is to say that the thermally conductive layer and electrical conductor tracks are situated in a common plane of the flexible printed circuit board, but are not connected to one another. In particular, the
35 thermally conductive layer is not in electrical contact with the conductor tracks. By way of example, the thermally conductive layer is in thermal contact with a

thermal connection part of the light emitting diode as described above.

5 In one preferred embodiment of the light emitting diode arrangement, the thermally conductive layer and also the electrical conductor tracks contain the same metal. Owing to its good thermal and electrical conductivity, copper, for example, is equally well suited to use in the thermally conductive layer and the electrical
10 conductor tracks.

In one embodiment of the light emitting diode arrangement, one of the surfaces of the flexible printed circuit board is covered with an electrically
15 insulating layer. The insulating layer preferably contains soldering resist. In one particularly preferred embodiment, the insulating layer has cutouts for making thermal and electrical contact with the high power light emitting diode. Through said cutouts, the
20 high power light emitting diode may for example be thermally connected to the thermally conductive layer and electrically connected to the conductor tracks.

In one particularly preferred embodiment of the light
25 emitting diode arrangement, an adhesive-containing layer is applied to that side of the flexible printed circuit board which is remote from the high power light emitting diodes. In this case, said adhesive-containing layer is preferably formed by a double sided adhesive
30 tape which is adhesively bonded by one of its adhesive surfaces onto the flexible printed circuit board in such a way that it completely covers the printed circuit board and terminates flush with the latter at the edges.

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In order to prevent inadvertent adhesive bonding on the printed circuit board, the adhesive tape fixed on the printed circuit board is preferably sealed with a

protective film at its free surface. Before the light emitting diode arrangement is applied at its intended location, said protective film merely has to be pulled off. In other words the light emitting diode arrangement can be adhesively bonded onto its intended location in the sense of a transfer.

In one particular preferred embodiment of the light emitting diode arrangement, the protective film in this case contains a plastic.

A particularly heat-resistant adhesive-containing layer is preferably used for the light emitting diode arrangement. In this case, the adhesive-containing layer can momentarily withstand temperatures of up to 250°C without being damaged. When the adhesive-containing layer is momentarily heated to this temperature value, the adhesive-containing layer does not lose its adhesive effect. A fixed adhesion of the light emitting diode arrangement at its intended location thus remains ensured even when the adhesive-containing layer is heated.

A particularly thin adhesive-containing layer having a maximum thickness of 60 μm is particularly preferred in this case. As a result, on the one hand it is ensured that the light emitting diode arrangement is very thin overall, and on the other hand the heat emitted to the flexible printed circuit board from the high power light emitting diode is conducted particularly well through such a thin layer and can then be emitted from there to the surroundings, for example the area onto which the light emitting diode arrangement is adhesively bonded.

In one particularly preferred embodiment of the light emitting diode arrangement, a multiplicity of high power light emitting diodes are applied on the flexible

printed circuit board. In this case, the high power light emitting diodes are preferably connected in series.

- 5 A pair of contact areas via which electrical contact can be made with the high power light emitting diode is preferably predetermined for each high power light emitting diode.
- 10 The light emitting diode arrangement is preferably subdivided into sections, each section having a high power light emitting diode and the associated pair of contact areas. Said sections are advantageously arranged on the printed circuit board as repeating,
- 15 regular structures.

In one particularly preferred embodiment of the light emitting diode arrangement, said sections are arranged in a series. The arrangement described makes it

20 possible to make contact with the totality of the high power light emitting diodes on the flexible printed circuit board by connecting the two outermost contact areas - at opposite sides of the light emitting diode arrangement - on the printed circuit board to a current

25 source.

Furthermore, the described construction of the light emitting diode arrangement enables the light emitting diode arrangement to be divided particularly simply

30 between the sections, thereby giving rise to partial light emitting diode arrangements each having a smaller number of sections than the original light emitting diode arrangement. It is also possible in the case of these light emitting diode arrangements having a

35 smaller number of high power light emitting diodes to make contact with in each case the totality of the light emitting diodes on the arrangement in the manner described. In this case, the light emitting diode

arrangement can be divided to an extent such that individual sections having in each case one high power light emitting diode and a pair of contact areas arise. In this way, the size of the light emitting diode arrangement and the number of light emitting diodes can be adapted to their intended purpose and the conditions of the intended location. That is to say that the light emitting diode arrangement is adapted for example to the required luminosity or the existing space.

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An illumination device is furthermore specified, in which the light emitting diode arrangement is applied to a predefined heat sink. In this case, the light emitting diode arrangement is preferably adhesively bonded onto the heat sink by its adhesive-containing layer. In this case, the adhesive bonding of the light emitting diode arrangement simultaneously ensures the mechanical fixing of the arrangement on the heat sink and also a thermal coupling of the arrangement to the heat sink. Thus, the heat emitted by the high power light emitting diodes is for example dissipated firstly to the thermally conductive layer. From there the heat is emitted to the flexible layer over a large area. The heat is then emitted to the heat sink through the thin adhesive-containing layer.

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Owing to its particularly good thermal conductivity, the heat sink preferably contains a metal. In one embodiment of the illumination device, the heat sink is part of a luminaire housing. In one particularly preferred embodiment, the luminaire housing is a housing for an automobile interior illumination, an automobile rear illumination, a brake light, a flashing indicator, or the like. The light emitting diode arrangement is adapted to the form of the respective luminaire housing on account of the flexible printed circuit board.

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Furthermore, a method for producing a light emitting diode arrangement is specified. In this case, firstly an adhesive-containing layer is applied to the flexible printed circuit board. Afterward, the light emitting
5 diodes are soldered onto that side of the printed circuit board which is remote from the adhesive-containing layer. In this case, the application of the adhesive-containing layer may be effected before the soldering operation, since a particularly heat-
10 resistant adhesive is used. This order of the production process also proves to be particularly advantageous since the adhesive-containing layer can be applied particularly simply to the flexible printed circuit board without light emitting diodes mounted
15 beforehand.

The light emitting diode arrangement described here is explained in more detail below on the basis of an exemplary embodiment and the associated figures.

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Figure 1 shows a schematic illustration of the surface of the flexible printed circuit board of the light emitting diode arrangement.

25 Figure 2 shows a schematic illustration of the plane of the thermally conductive layer and the electrical conductor tracks.

Figure 3 shows a sectional view through a section of
30 the light emitting diode arrangement.

Figure 1 shows the surface of the flexible printed circuit board 10 of the light emitting diode arrangement subdivided into six sections 11. In this
35 case, Figure 1 shows the top side of the printed circuit board 10, to which the light emitting diodes 34 can be applied. The surface of the flexible printed circuit board 10 is covered with an insulating layer

12. Situated in the insulating layer 12 are cutouts through which a connection to the electrical connection locations 13, the thermal contact area 14 and the electrical contact areas 15 is possible.

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The exemplary embodiment of a light emitting diode arrangement having six sections 11 is not restrictive in this case. Rather it is possible to produce light emitting diode arrangements 10 having any desired number of sections 11.

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The flexible printed circuit board 11 has an insulating layer 12 at its surface. The insulating layer 12 is provided by a layer containing soldering resist.

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The electrical connection locations 13 are situated below cutouts in the insulating layer 12. At the electrical connection locations 13, a high power light emitting diode is electrically contact-connected and mechanically fixed to the flexible printed circuit board. In this case, electrical contact-connection and mechanical fixing of the high power light emitting diode preferably take place by means of a soldering connection.

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The thermal contact area 14 is situated below a cutout in the insulating layer 12. At the thermal contact area 14, the high power light emitting diode is thermally coupled to the thermally conductive layer. The thermal connection part of the high power light emitting diode and the thermally conductive layer are preferably contact-connected at the thermal contact area 14 by means of a soldering connection, so that an additional mechanical fixing of the high power light emitting diode to the flexible printed circuit board is effected besides the thermal contact-connection. However, a thermally conductive temperature-stable adhesive may

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also be used as an alternative to the soldering connection.

Electrical contact is made with the high power light emitting diode via the electrical contact areas 15. In this case, contact can be made with the totality of all the light emitting diodes of the light emitting diode arrangement by connecting the two outermost electrical contact areas 15a and 15b to a current source.

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Figure 2 shows the plane of the printed circuit board 10 with the thermally conductive layer 21 and the electrical conductor tracks 22, 23 of the flexible printed circuit board 10.

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The high power light emitting diode is coupled to the thermally conductive layer 21 via the thermal contact area 14. In this case, the thermally conductive layer 21 has a particularly large area in order that the heat emitted by the high power light emitting diode can be emitted to the surroundings over a large area. In this case, the thermally conductive layer 21 is not in electrical contact with electrical conductor tracks 22, contact areas 15 or connection locations 13.

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By way of example, the thermally conductive layer 21 may have an essentially round form. By way of example, the thermally conductive layer 21 occupies at least 60 percent of the area of the plane of the printed circuit board 10 in which it is situated. It preferably occupies at least 70 percent, particularly preferably at least 80 percent.

The electrical contact areas 15 and the electrical connection locations 13 are connected to one another by first electrical conductor tracks 22. The electrical connection locations 13 are interconnected by second electrical conductor tracks 23. In this case, the

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thermally conductive layer 21 and the electrical conductor tracks 22 and 23 may contain the same metal. Copper is preferably used in this case owing to its good electrical and thermal conductivity.

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The construction of the light emitting diode arrangement shown makes it possible in this case to sever the light emitting diode arrangement along the line C-C', for example without restricting the contact-connection possibilities. Two printed circuit boards 10 each comprising three high power light emitting diodes arise as a result in this example.

Said high power light emitting diodes in turn can be electrically connected by means of the two outermost contact areas being contact-connected to a current source. It is possible, of course, to sever the light emitting diode also between the other sections 11 of the light emitting diode arrangement. It is possible in this case to separate the light emitting diode arrangement to an extent such that light emitting diode arrangements arise which in each case then have only one section 11 with a single high power light emitting diode.

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Figure 3 shows a sectional view through a section 11 of the light emitting diode arrangement along the sectional line A-A'. In this case, the light emitting diode arrangement comprises a flexible printed circuit board, onto which is mounted a high power light emitting diode 34 with its electrical connection parts 35 and its thermal connection part 36. In this exemplary embodiment, the flexible printed circuit board comprises the following layers: a protective film 31, an adhesive-containing layer 32, a carrier layer 33, the thermally conductive layer 21 and the electrical conductor tracks 22, 23, and also an insulating layer 12.

The protective film 31, which contains a plastic, is situated at the underside of the light emitting diode arrangement 10. The protective film covers the adhesive-containing layer 32. In this case, the protective film 31 protects the adhesive-containing layer 32 against contamination, on the one hand, and on the other hand it prevents inadvertent adhesive bonding of the light emitting diode arrangement. In this case, the protective film 31 is configured in such a way that it can be stripped away easily in one work step from the adhesive-containing layer 32.

In the present exemplary embodiment, the adhesive-containing layer 32 is provided by a double sided adhesive tape. Said adhesive tape is chosen to be highly heat-resistant, on the one hand, so that it can withstand temperatures of up to 250°C without being damaged. On the other hand, a very thin adhesive tape is chosen. In the present exemplary embodiment, the adhesive-containing layer 32 has a thickness of just 50 µm. This ensures that the heat emitted by the high power light emitting diode 34 can be emitted to the surroundings particularly rapidly through the adhesive-containing layer.

The adhesive-containing layer 32 is fixed at the flexible carrier layer 33. In this case, the carrier layer 33 preferably contains one of the following materials: polyimide, polyethylene naphthalate, polyester or FR4. It is conceivable in this case for other plastics also to be taken into consideration for use in the carrier layer 33. What is important in this case is that flexibility of the light emitting diode arrangement is preserved and the carrier layer 33 dissipates well the heat arising during operation of the high power light emitting diode.

The thermally conductive layer 21 and the electrical conductor tracks 22, 23 are applied to the carrier layer 33. They are followed by the insulating layer 12.

5 The high power light emitting diode 34 is applied by its electrical connection parts 35 at the electrical connection locations 13 and is thus connected to electrical conductor tracks 22, 23. In this case, the thermal connection part 36 of the high power light
10 emitting diode 34 bears on the thermal contact area 14 and is soldered onto the thermally conductive layer 21 at said contact area.

The invention is not restricted by the description on
15 the basis of the exemplary embodiments. Rather, the invention encompasses any new feature and also any combination of features which in particular comprises any combination of features in the patent claims, even if this feature or this combination itself is not
20 explicitly specified in the patent claims or exemplary embodiments.